

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 CU-02 AGR-05 AID-05 COME-00 EB-07 FRB-03
TRSE-00 XMB-02 OPIC-03 LAB-04 EPG-02 SIL-01
OMB-01 STR-04 CEA-01 ITC-01 /097 W
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P R 202048Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1626
INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS
USSOUTHCOM
AMCONSUL CALI
AMCONSUL BARRANQUILLA
AMCONSUL MEDELLIN

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, ECON, CO
SUBJECT: THE WEEK IN COLOMBIA

1. SUMMARY. OSPINA-PASTRANA CONSERVATIVES EXPRESSED STRONG
OPPOSITION TO THE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT WHICH WOULD SEPARATE
THE LEGISLATIVE AND PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, AND
PASSAGE OF THIS CHANGE MAY BE IN DANGER. THE GOC DEFENDED ITS
CLOSURE OF THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY AND PROMISED BASIC REFORM
OF HIGHER EDUCATION. ALLEGED WRONGDOING BY THE PRESIDENT'S
SONS CONTINUED TO RECEIVE PUBLIC ATTENTION. PRESS DEBATE ALSO
CONTINUED ON MISSIONARY AND RELIGIOUS GROUPS, INCLUDING
THE SUMMER INSTITUTE OF LINGUISTICS. THE GOC ANNOUNCED DEVELOP-
MENT PROJECTS ON WHICH IT WILL SEEK IBRD CONCURRENCE.
HIGHER COFFEE PRICES BROUGHT RENEWED CONCERN OVER THE
LONG TERM EFFECT OF COFFEE CONSUMPTION AND ANTI-INFLATION
EFFORTS.

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2. CONSERVATIVES ATTACK SEPARATE ELECTIONS PROPOSAL.
THE OSPINA-PASTRANA WING OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY OPENED
A NEW FRONT OF OPPOSITION AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT AND THE
PRO-GOVERNMENT ALVARISTA WING OF THEIR PARTY WHEN IT CALLED
ON CONSERVATIVES IN CONGRESS TO OPPOSED THE PROPOSED CONSTI-
TUTIONAL AMENDMENT WHICH WOULD SEPARATE THE PRESIDENTIAL

AND LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS. THIS CHANGE IS TO RECEIVE ITS SECOND AND LAST HEARING IN CONGRESS BEGINNING IN JULY, AND WOULD AFFECT THE 1978 ELECTIONS. THE OSPINA-PASTRANA LEADERS CHARGED THAT THIS AMENDMENT WOULD BENEFIT ONLY THE LIBERAL PARTY BY ALLOWING IT TO USE LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS IN FEBRUARY AS A PRIMARY FOR PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN JUNE, THUS HELPING THE LIBERALS TO RESOLVE THEIR INTERNAL PROBLEMS BUT OFFERING NOTHING TO THE CONSERVATIVES. THE LIBERALS BELIEVE THAT THEY HAVE ENOUGH SUPPORT TO PASS THE AMENDMENT, IF THE ALVARISTA CONSERVATIVES SUPPORT IT. THE ALVARISTAS, WHILE PUBLICLY REJECTING THE OSPINA-PASTRANA PROPOSAL, MAY FIND THEMSELVES IN A DIFFICULT POSITION WHEN THE VOTE COMES. THEIR SUPPORT OF THE AMENDMENT COULD WELL GUARANTEE A UNITED LIBERAL PARTY IN THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS AND THE DEFEAT OF THE CONSERVATIVE'S CANDIDATE. SUCH SUPPORT WOULD ALSO BE HARD TO JUSTIFY TO CONSERVATIVE VOTERS. TO VOTE AGAINST THE AMENDMENT, HOWEVER WOULD PROBABLY PROVOKE A SPLIT BETWEEN THE ALVARISTAS AND THE LOPEZ GOVERNMENT.

3. EDUCATION MINISTER PORPOSED UNIVERSITY REFORMS. MINISTER OF EDUCATION RAFAEL RIVAS POSADA, IN A TELEVISED MESSAGE TO THE NATION, DEFENDED THE PROLONGED CLOSURE OF THE VIOLENCE-PLAGUED NATIONAL UNIVERSITY IN BOGOTA AND ANNOUNCED HIS INTENTION TO SEEK CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL FOR AN EXTENSIVE REFORMATION OF THE NATION'S SYSTEM OF HIGHER EDUCATION. RIVAS CALLED THE CURRENT EDUCATIONAL CRISIS A "MORAL AND INSTITUTIONAL BREAKDOWN", AND SUGGESTED THAT THE SYSTEM REQUIRES ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL REFORMS, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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A CLEAR DELIMITATION OF STUDENT AND FACULTY RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES, AND A UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION WITH GREATER AUTHORITY.

4. PRESIDENT'S SON TESTIFIES BEFORE CONGRESS. FELIPE LOPEZ, THE PRESIDENT'S SON AND PRIVATE SECRETARY, TESTIFIED BEFORE THE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEE INVESTIGATING CHARGES AGAINST HIM AND A FORMER CABINET MINISTER INVOLVING ALLEGED FINANCIAL IMPROPRIETIES. LOPEZ DENIED ANY PURPOSEFUL WRONGDOINGS AND CALLED THE CONTROVERSY A POLITICAL CONSPIRACY AGAINST HIS FATHER. THE OPPOSITION CONSERVATIVE PRESS, MEANWHILE, CONTINUED TO ROIL THE POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE WITH RENEWED CHARGES AGAINST ANOTHER PRESIDENTIAL PROGENY, MANUEL LOPEZ, WHO IS ALSO ACCUSED OF HAVING PERSONALLY BENEFITTED FROM DEALINGS WITH GOVERNMENT AGENCIES.

5. LOCAL PRESS CONTINUES CRITICISM OF US RELIGIOUS GROUP. THE U.S. - BASED SUMMER INSTITUTE OF LINGUISTICS (SIL), AS

WELL AS OTHER NON-COLOMBIAN MISSIONARY ORGANIZATIONS, AGAIN (SEE BOGOTA 354) RECEIVED CONSIDERABLE ATTENTION IN THE LOCAL PRESS. THIS TIME, HOWEVER SOME OF THE CRITICISM WAS FAVORABLE. THE LIBERAL WEEKLY "NUEVA FRONTERA" PUBLISHED A LENGTHY, UNFAVORABLE ARTICLE ON THESE GROUPS, INCLUDING THE SIL, QUESTIONING THEIR PURPOSE AND SUGGESTING THAT MOST OF THEM ARE POTENTIAL THREATS TO NATIONAL SECURITY AND SOVEREIGNTY. THIS WAS FOLLOWED BY A FAVORABLE EDITORIAL AND TWO OBJECTIVE ARTICLES, DESCRIBING SOME OF THE SIL'S GOOD WORKS, IN BOGOTA'S TWO LEADING LIBERAL NEWSPAPERS. AN SIL SPOKESMAN HAS NOTED THAT INCREASED PRESS ATTENTION IS HABITUALLY GIVEN TO THE INSTITUTE WHEN ITS CONTRACT WITH THE GOC IS BEING RENEGOTIATED.

6. COLOMBIA PREPARES FOR WORLD BANK MEETING. THE COLOMBIAN GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCED THIS WEEK THAT IT WOULD PRESENT 103 DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS TO THE IBRD CONSULTATIVE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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GROUP, SCHEDULED TO MEET IN PARIS AT THE END OF JUNE. ACCORDING TO THE PLANNING OFFICE, THE TOTAL VALUE OF THE PROJECTS IS \$6.7 BILLION WITH THE FOREIGN FINANCED COMPONENT ESTIMATED AT \$3.9 BILLION. FOLLOWING THE PATTERN ESTABLISHED AT THE LAST MEETING OF THE CONSULTATIVE GROUP, HELD IN BOGOTA IN OCTOBER 1976, THE MAJOR SECTORAL EMPHASIS IS ON ENERGY (\$3.26 BILLION), FOLLOWED BY MINING AND INDUSTRY (\$1.14 BILLION), TRANSPORTATION (\$604 MILLION), AGRICULTURE (\$528 MILLION), COMMUNICATIONS, REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT, WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE, HEALTH AND EDUCATION.

7. REACTION TO COFFEE FROST IN BRAZIL. NEWS OF A POSSIBLE FROST AFFECTING COFFEE PRODUCTION IN BRAZIL RECEIVED HEADLINE TREATMENT IN COLOMBIA, AND THE WHOLESALE PRICE OF COFFEE, WHICH HAD FALLEN TO UNDER \$2.70 A POUND, ALMOST IMMEDIATELY RECOVERED TO OVER \$3.00 A POUND. WHILE COFFEE EXPORTERS CONTINUED TO EXPRESS THEIR DELIGHT OVER HIGH PRICES, THE GOC AND THE COFFEE FEDERATION WERE BOTH-ERED BY THE ERRATIC MARKET AND THE PRICE LEVELS, WHICH THEY SEE AS LEADING TO A LONG TERM DECLINE IN COFFEE CONSUMPTION AND AS A CONTINUING THREAT TO THE GOVERNMENT'S ANTI-INFLATION EFFORTS. MEANWHILE, RESPONDING TO PRESSURES FROM GROWERS, PRESIDENT LOPEZ ANNOUNCED THAT BEGINNING IN JULY THERE WOULD BE MODERATE UPWARD ADJUSTMENTS IN THE INTERNAL SUPPORT PRICE FOR COFFEE. GROWERS HAVE BEEN CLAIMING, WITH SOME JUSTIFICATION, THAT THE COFFEE BONANZA HAS LED TO SHARPLY INCREASED COSTS OF PRODUCTIONS, PARTICULARLY AS REGARDS WAGES FOR PICKERS.
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Message Attributes

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